

**May is Better Sleep
Month**

Fresh & Healthy Recipe

Ask the Coach

**National Employee
Health & Fitness Day**

May is *Better Sleep* Month

When was the last time you had a good night's sleep? If you're like millions of Americans, it's probably been a while. In fact, research shows that over the last 20 years, the average number of hours we sleep at night has declined significantly. Today, over 1/3 of American adults get less than seven hours of sleep and nearly 10% experience chronic insomnia, or the inability to get to sleep and/or maintain restful sleep.

You might think of sleep as a luxury, but research is proving that sleep is a necessity we can't afford to miss. Sleep deprivation has been linked to chronic diseases and conditions such as diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease and depression. Lack of sleep is known to impact our immune system, memory and judgment, which can lead to auto accidents, injury and even poor job performance!

Are you getting enough shut eye?

By definition, sleep is a state of rest when the nervous system is inactive, the muscles are relaxed and the mind is unconscious. The actual amount of sleep needed may vary by individual, but generally experts recommend adults get seven to nine hours of sleep each night. With this in mind, are you getting enough shut eye? If not, consider adopting a few of these healthy sleep habits:

Unplug

Technology is thought to be one of the biggest sleep stealers. A National Sleep Foundation study shows that nighttime computer, video game and cell phone interaction disrupts the sleep onset process, making it more difficult to get restful sleep. Avoid using technology an hour before going to bed.



Set the Mood

Clear out all gadgets and electronics from your bedroom, including the TV, computer, phones, etc. Vow not to perform activities like writing, paying bills or working in bed. Create a dark, inviting atmosphere that is not too cold or too hot.

Create Routines

Stick to a consistent bedtime and start relaxing nighttime rituals like taking a warm bath or drinking warm milk or herbal tea before you settle in. Begin the process an hour before you want to get to sleep.

continued from page 1

Minimize Stress

Stress negatively impacts your physical and emotional health – don't let it rob you of a good night's sleep! Look for ways to deal with the stress in your life, including meditation, exercise or journaling. Write down your worries before you get into bed to help take your "to do" list off your mind.

More tips for restful sleeping:

1. Don't go to bed unless you are sleepy. If you are not asleep within 20 minutes, get out of bed, go to another room and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy.
2. Go to bed at the same time each night and wake up at the same time each morning. Weekend habits can disrupt the routine.
3. Avoid strenuous exercise within six hours of your normal bedtime.
4. Don't go to bed hungry, but avoid heavy meals near bedtime.
5. Avoid taking naps during the day.
6. Avoid caffeine after lunch and nicotine before bedtime.

If you still wake up tired after trying some of these techniques, make an appointment to see your doctor. Conditions like sleep apnea and restless leg syndrome are disorders that require medical evaluation and treatment.

Just like eating well and staying active, getting a good night's sleep is an important part of your overall healthy lifestyle. Sweet dreams!

Recommended Daily Sleep

Age/Life Stage	Avg Sleep/Day
Newborn	up to 18 hours
1–12 months	14–18 hours
1–3 years	12–15 hours
3–5 years	11–13 hours
5–12 years	9–11 hours
Adolescents	9–10 hours
Adults, including elderly	7–8 hours
Pregnant women	8(+) hours

Want to find out more information about sleep health? Check out the A-Z Health Topics on MyBlueService! Simply log in to **MyBlueService** from www.bcbsfl.com and access the **Living Healthy** tab. Click on **A-Z Health Topics from WebMD** and then **Sleep Health**.

Fresh & Healthy

Recipe of the Month

Cucumber-Tuna Salad Pockets

Ingredients:

- 1 pouch (about 7 oz.) albacore tuna
- 1/4 cup reduced-fat mayonnaise or salad dressing
- 1/4 cup plain fat-free yogurt
- 1/2 cup chopped cucumber
- 2 Tbsp. chopped red onion
- 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh or 1 tsp. dried dill weed
- 1 tsp. salt-free seasoning blend
- 2 whole wheat pita rounds (8 in.)
- 1 cup shredded lettuce
- 1 small tomato, chopped (1/2 cup)



Preparation:

In medium bowl, mix tuna, reduced-fat mayonnaise, yogurt, cucumber, onion, dill weed and seasoning blend. Cut pita rounds in half crosswise to form pockets. Spoon 1/4 mixture into each half of pita. Add lettuce and tomato. Makes 4 servings.

Nutritional Analysis: Calories per serving: 220; (Calories from Fat 60); Total Fat: 7g (Saturated Fat 1g, Trans Fat 0g); Cholesterol: 20mg; Sodium: 470mg; Total Carbohydrate: 23g (Dietary Fiber 3g, Sugars 3g); Protein: 18g

Looking for delicious, healthy recipes the whole family can enjoy? Check out our Healthy Recipes from WebMD! Simply log in to **MyBlueService** from bcbsfl.com and access the **Living Healthy** tab. Click on **My Health Manager** and under **Healthy Fun**, select **Healthy Recipes**.

Ask the Coach

Q I haven't actually injured my back, but my lower back hurts frequently. What's causing it and what can I do about it?

A While lower back pain can be caused by an injury, it's often a result of posture and lifestyle behaviors. For example, professions requiring sitting at a computer for long periods of time are hard on the muscles supporting the spine. Even jobs requiring standing or moving around can take a toll on our backs due to poor posture and strength.

To help alleviate the pain, you first have to monitor your posture and make corrections frequently. In a standing position, you have proper posture if your ears, shoulders, hips, knees and ankles are in a straight line with a just a slight, natural curve in at the lower spine. In a seated position this posture would be the same, except that the knees and ankles would line up separately from the ear, shoulders, and hips. Adjust your posture often to avoid slouching and creating muscle imbalances.

Also, it's important to strengthen your core muscles to develop and maintain the muscle balance and stability to maintain good posture. Here are some exercises that you can incorporate into your fitness routine. Hold each pose 5-8 seconds and then repeat.

Plank: This looks just like the starting position to a push-up, where you are pushed up and your palms are directly under the shoulders, arms are straight, and spine is straight.



Bird-dog: Starting on your hands and knees with your shoulders directly above your palms and your hips in line with your knees, extend one arm straight out. Continue to look at the floor and pull the stomach muscles in, and then extend the opposite leg.



Glute Bridge: Start by lying on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Tilt your tailbone and lift until your lower back is completely off the floor.



acefitness.org

Celebrate National Employee Health & Fitness Day *May 18th*

Celebrate **National Employee Health & Fitness Day™** by promoting the benefits of physical fitness in the workplace.

By far, the number one reason most of us don't exercise is lack of time. It makes good sense to look for ways to incorporate physical activity into our work day, especially since work is where we spend most of our waking hours!

This month, look for ways to get moving at work. Things to try:

- Park your car further away from your building.
- Take a 3-5 minute walk around the office every hour (set your phone or your watch to remind you).
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Schedule "walking" meetings.
- Walk around the building before heading to your car at the end of the day.

But don't stop there! You can also build in additional physical activity at home. For example:

- Take a quick walk around the block before starting dinner.
- Do push-ups on the counter or use soup cans to do a few arm curls while you make dinner.
- Do push-ups, sit-ups, squats or lunges during TV commercial breaks (use slow, controlled motion and start with 10 and build up from there).
- Balance on one leg while you brush your teeth.
- Schedule recreational activities such as tennis, basketball, volleyball, bicycling and dancing.

Ready, Set, Get Moving!

Regular physical activity not only reduces your waistline, it lowers stress, blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol. Over time, these small steps add up to big improvements in your health, energy and outlook!

webmd.com

nhlbi.nih.gov/health

